

It's all about that post; opportunities and challenges of sharing information online

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Summary

IT'S ALL ABOUT THAT POST: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF SHARING INFORMATION ONLINE

We live in an information sharing society that thrives because of technologies that enable individuals to broadcast their thoughts and experiences through social media. Users spend a significant amount of time communicating with others through these technologies. But we know little about how sharing information online affects the individuals who post information. In this dissertation, I confront this research gap by studying positive and negative consequences of sharing information online.

The first manuscript, “Sharing is Rewarding,” examines how writing emotional reviews affects reviewer behaviors. Drawing on the theory of reverse alliesthesia, we find the act of sharing personal opinions is itself a rewarding experience that may cause reviewers to behave impulsively. Firms can minimize the occurrence of impulsive behaviors and their negative consequences by praising reviewers immediately after their writing tasks, because social approval provides the reviewers with rewards. However, not all individuals are equally affected; participants who are more sensitive to social cues seem particularly susceptible to these negative effects.

The second manuscript, “A (Re)View of Myself,” investigates how writing reviews about previous learning experiences triggers unmotivated channel partners to participate in additional learning modules. In line with metacognition theory, we find review writing serves as an effective metacognitive intervention that heightens belief certainty about knowledge acquisition and spurs channel partners

to pursue further learning. However, these findings are contingent on two boundary conditions: (1) writing for the benefit of peers rather than the manufacturer and (2) a focused rather than broad perspective of the learning content.

The third manuscript, “Unraveling the Personalization Paradox,” takes the research a step further by studying the effects that occur when firms collect and use information shared by customers online to provide them with personalized advertisements. In line with psychological ownership theory, we find that customers perceive they own their information and feel vulnerable when their information is collected and used without their consent. When firms collect information overtly, participants exhibit greater click-through intentions in response to personalized advertisements than when firms collect information covertly. Trust-building marketing strategies (transferring trust from another website or signaling trust with informational cues) can offset this negative effect.